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ABSTRACT

The Duluth (Minnesota) Public School district has established a comprehensive Quality of Work Life (QWL) participative management program. Operating since 1984, the program is structured district-wide with a steering committee and 35 QWL committees at building and program levels. School board policy and administrative guidelines provide direction for the program. This document describes (1) the goals of the QWL program; (2) the unique nature of the participative process used; (3) the ground rules under which QWL committees operate; (4) answers to common questions about the extent to which the QWL concept threatens management and labor and about when results can be expected from the program; and (5) the role of the districtwide QWL facilitator. Also included in the report are (1) the text of the school board policy providing the philosophical basis for QWL; (2) the text of the rules, procedures, and guidelines adopted for the QWL program; (3) descriptions of the Duluth community and its school system; (4) brief biographies of those presenting the report; and (5) a 20-item bibliography. (PGD)

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Duluth Public Schools
Duluth, Minnesota

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Clarence Maddy	Director/Personnel	(218)723-4150

Independent School District #709
Duluth Public Schools
Duluth, Minnesota 55802

The School Board and staff of the Duluth School District are committed to Participative Management and the Quality of Work Life process. The process is currently in operation in 35 building sites and at the administration level.

Anyone with questions or who desires more information on the Duluth process is invited to contact any of the following resource people.

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PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT
A LABOR MANAGEMENT PROCESS THAT WORKS FOR KIDS

The Duluth Public School District has established a comprehensive Quality of Work Life participative management program. Operating since 1984, the program is structured district-wide with a steering committee and 35 Quality of Work Life committees meeting at building and program levels. A school board policy and administrative guidelines provide direction for the program.

Quality education depends on quality staff. Participative management and the QWL process in Duluth provide the structure and process to involve staff. Utilizing the creative insights and expertise of staff members improves relationships within the district, identifies and solves problems, and improves communication. The experience of true involvement in analyzing and solving problems builds feelings of greater commitment to school district goals and a "win-win" climate in which the quality and acceptance of decisions is enhanced through greater participation by those who have to implement and live with the consequences of those decisions.

QUALITY OF WORK LIFE CONCEPTS IN THE DULUTH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Len Golen, QWL Facilitator

THE GOAL

The goal of the QWL and participative management program is to better meet the mission of the institution, corporation, business, or school district.

The mission of the Duluth Public Schools is to improve instruction and student achievement for a diverse student population.

THE PROCESS

1. The QWL process is designed to improve communication, trust, and problem-solving related to the quality of work life of all employees in work sites.

2. Participative management and quality of work life is a process and not a specific program. This process encourages all members of the organization to participate in management decisions that affect their work life and enhances more effective decision making.

3. Inherent in the QWL Committee and process is the recognition that each member of the organization is critical to the success of the organization, that each member has value and that the insights and contributions of each member are needed to identify and implement successful change.

4. The QWL process is "change oriented". It provides a process to identify priority change needs through brainstorming, research, identification and evaluation of proposed solutions, implementation, and follow-up.

5. Issues are brought to the QWL Committee through members of the committee. After brainstorming, issues are prioritized and researched. Proposals for solution or change are presented to the administration or proper decision-making body. If the solution can be implemented within the department, school, or district, after consensus, it can be implemented. If the proposed solution has implications beyond the building or department, it may be submitted to the proper administrative personnel for action. Proposals are to be implemented or reasons are given for not implementing the proposed solution.

6. All actions of the committee are accomplished through consensus.

7. Meetings of the QWL committees are held on work time. Duluth has developed a process to award compensatory time when this is necessary because of scheduling.

8. The QWL process is not a substitute for administration. It does enhance cooperation and communication, and tends to result in better "specific" decisions and programs that benefit all employees and students.

9. At the building level, the QWL process does not deal with issues related to contract and negotiations. Issues that may arise that relate to the contract and negotiations are referred to the appropriate employee group and administration. At the steering committee level, issues related to the contract and not in negotiations may be discussed in the process. In no case does the QWL process substitute for negotiations or unit contracts.

10. The QWL Committee and process does not deal with personalities or evaluation of specific individuals. Issues are discussed and worked with in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

11. Communications, patience, and determination are essential for participative management and a successful QWL program. The process requires administration, teachers and other employees to develop new roles sharing decision-making and responsibility. Change takes time. Research has established that the results pay large dividends.

GROUND RULES

Ground rules must be established under which a QWL committee operates. The following ground rules were agreed upon in Duluth.

Employee participation cannot be mandatory. Employees should be involved because they want to be involved.

Mutually agreed to topics of discussion must not include issues in bargaining nor pending grievances.

Committees must operate on an issue, cause, effect and resolution basis, never on a personal basis.

Minutes must be recorded and the recommendations of the committee must be communicated regularly to all affected employees. If a recommendation is made by the steering committee, it is communicated to all employees district-wide; a building committee would communicate recommendations to all employees in that building.

Whenever possible, the structure, scope, procedures, selections and term of participants at the building level should be determined by that committee itself.

The QWL concept recognizes the need for employee involvement in problem and solution identification but not in final decision making, which must continue to be vested in those management personnel and School Board members who are held legally responsible for governance of the district.

Either side may terminate its participation in the process if it feels the program is no longer useful.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

Questions and concerns are expressed about implementing a Quality of Work Life process. Two common questions are--"Does the QWL concept represent an implied threat to management and labor?" and, "When are we going to see significant results?"

Whenever there is a change in the philosophy of an organization which involves employees more directly in the problem and solution identification process, it is normal for both labor and management to feel threatened not only by the change alone, but also more fundamentally, by what effect the possible intrusion of employee involvement may have upon the traditional mangement role and upon union leaders' advisory power. However, once the QWL committees are properly initiated and implemented, growing experience with QWL has proven those fears to diminish and everyone wins more power. It's a different kind of power than that based on authority. It is a power to influence and create results. It's the kind of power which wisdom and leadership wins. It provides both management and unions with new influence.

QWL activities do not deal with all issues in an organization and they do not provide the instant, next quarter results many may desire. QWL will and should take time to slowly refine and develop its impact upon the organization. It takes discipline, patience and care to slowly spread across, upward and downward in the organization. It isn't easy. It's hard work by a lot of people and involves the pain and stress any kind of change brings.

Results are not always easily visible. What happens in QWL efforts is something inside people and between people. It creates changes in social interaction and organizational situations. To work most effectively, all persons within the organization must have the opportunity to participate; and, as the process continues, meaningful results will become evident.

The QWL approach is a new operational means created out of a contemporary human expectation to provide input into decisions which affect one's work life. It's a pragmatic process of opening opportunities for human development as one means to provide better service as an organization. Too often the ends and aspirations of workers are still perceived as disparate from the ends of the organization, creating a dysfunction beneficial to neither the people in the organization nor the organization itself. QWL is a means to combine those ends and the students and citizens will be the beneficiaries.

QUALITY OF WORK LIFE FACILITATOR

The Quality of Work Life process is an internal communications process that requires facilitation and coordination to be successful. The District-Wide QWL Facilitator assists the Steering Committee implementing the process and provides assistance and training for the thirty-five QWL groups within the District. Following are some of the duties of the Facilitator:

1. Provide information and training on participative management and the QWL process.

2. Assist groups implementing the process.

3. Assist District sub-committees research and develop proposal presentations.

4. Maintain group and individual interaction through the development of trust and open lines of communications.

5. Provide a network of communications between building level, program, and District QWL activities.

6. Meet with each QWL group and provide assistance as needed and requested.

7. Develop, plan, and implement training sessions.

8. Maintain records on each QWL group in the District to identify the types of issues addressed, successes, and frustrations.

9. Maintain records of each staff member who earns compensation time in each QWL problem solving group and verify time to the Personnel Office (staff members earn compensatory time that carries over from year to year and can only be used when a minimum of four hours, 1/2 day, has been accumulated.

10. Provide periodic reports, articles, and newsletters on the QWL process.

11. Plan, develop, produce, and implement T.V. productions, video tapes, programs, and presentations on participative management and the QWL process.

12. Plan, develop, produce, and implement staff recognition programs. (Staff recognition is an essential component of a successful Quality of Work Life and participative management process.)

13. Maintain communications with the various bargaining units on the progress of QWL and the issues under consideration.

14. Implement additional activities and tasks necessary to the QWL process.

Effective facilitation is necessary if a participative management and Quality of Work Life process is to be successful. The school district must provide the needed resources in terms of personnel, training, materials, and space.

Participative Management

Quality Work Life

Philosophy

It is the goal of the School Board to achieve excellence in teaching, student achievement, community involvement, and general operations throughout the School District. It is the conviction of the Board that the only way in which that goal may be achieved is through pooling the talent and wisdom of all of the employees of the District. Therefore, it shall be the policy of the District that programs of employee involvement and participation in problem solving and decision making processes shall be encouraged. Specifically, excellence in management shall be understood to be that management which:

- encourages participation and creativity among staff
- builds commitment to shared goals
- structures employee involvement so employees are routinely involved in decisions which affect them
- sets a high priority on advocating for ideas generated by subordinates
- develops a strong sense of trust and collegiality among all staff members in the pursuit of the goal of excellence.

Therefore, all supervisory personnel including principals, educational directors, directors, superintendents shall be expected to create and maintain a work environment that encourages employee participation, enhances communications within the District and promotes the general welfare of students and the morale of staff. All employees are called upon to work cooperatively and openly to maintain a network of communications which results in a shared pride in shared work, and achievement of our common goal of excellence.

Reference: MS 179A.08, Sec. 9, Subd. 1

Policy adopted: 6-9-70

Independent School District #709
Duluth, Minnesota

Policy revised: 9-11-84

Participative Management

Quality Work Life

Rules, Procedures and Guidelines

General

For purposes of effectively initiating and maintaining a participative management focus, a district-wide steering committee of limited initial representation shall be formed that will foster the growth and development of participative management practices at each building and to the extent possible, identify and address problems that are of concern to employees on a district-wide basis. Committee meetings at every level are open to all employees.

The district-wide steering committee shall assist building level problem solving groups by providing guidance and direction and training in group problem solving techniques and by engaging in group problem solving, itself, on a district-wide basis.

Building Level Problem Solving Groups

1. There will be a building problem solving group. This group may be called a QWL Committee, Senate, Principal's Advisory Committee or whatever title and structure best fits the uniqueness of the particular building and its membership.

2. In addition to the main group in the building there may be any number of sub-committees to work on individual specific short term topics. These sub-groups could be formed as a result of the building problem solving group, at the request of the principal, or as a result of a group concern.

3. Within each building some matters may be addressed by the entire staff using such techniques as "brainstorming."

Problem Solving Group Organization and Standards

1. The building problem solving group shall consist of the school principal, union steward(s), and volunteers selected by the employees of the building.

2. The group should be comprised of four to ten members. The school principal and building union steward(s) should not serve as chair nor do they have to serve on all sub-committees of the building.

Regulation
adopted: 11-7-84

Independent School District #709
Duluth, Minesota

Participative Management

Quality Work Life

Rules, Procedures and Guidelines

Problem Solving Group Organization and Standards (Continued)

3. The structure, scope, procedures, selection and term of participants are to be determined by the people involved. Building problem solving group members other than the principal and union steward should be rotated periodically.

4. Upon request to the district-wide steering committee, training shall be provided for building problem solving group members.

5. Problem solving groups will operate on an issue, cause, effect and resolution basis, never on a personal basis.

6. Contractual issues, areas that have been settled in the collective bargaining agreements and issues which have been settled in past grievance settlements, are not appropriate topics for discussion. Questions of interpretation of this subsection should be referred to the district-wide steering committee.

7. Minutes must be recorded. Each problem solving group should design and implement a process of communication within the building.

8. The district-wide steering committee will receive reports and recommendations from building groups, and work to achieve effective implementation of solutions.

9. Announcement of decisions should be made by someone other than the principal or building union steward(s). All decisions should be accompanied by a full explanation.

Problem Solving Groups Methodology/Techniques

I. Encourage group discussion to identify problems that are work related

A. List problems in priority order.

1. Is it a contractual issue? If it is, it should not be dealt with.

Participative Management

Quality Work Life

Rules, Procedures and Guidelines

Problem Solving Groups Methodology/Techniques (Continued)

2. Is it a situation that the group can influence?

3. Is it a situation where the decision maker will consider the group's recommendation?

4. If the answer to question two or three is yes, the committee can proceed.

II. Gather information on the problem

A. Written records, checklists, interviews.

B. Review information and put it in order for analysis by the committee.

III. Generate Solutions

A. Elicit input from the members.

B. Record each suggestion.

C. Do not evaluate the ideas until everyone has had the opportunity to speak.

D. Avoid hasty criticism that tends to cut off new ideas.

IV. Evaluate Solutions

A. What will work best?

B. Will the solution solve the problem or only touch the symptoms?

C. Evaluate the proposed solutions on grounds of practicality, ease of implementation, and costs.

D. Possible negative outcomes should be considered.

V. Reach agreement, by consensus, on the best solution (be sure all members understand and agree with the proposed solution.)

VI. Implement the decision

A. The building problem solving group must recognize it does not have full power over implementation.

Participative Management

Quality Work Life

Rules, Procedures and Guidelines

Problem Solving Groups Methodology/Techniques (Continued)

B. In cases where implementation can take place, timetables, assignment of responsibilities and reports will be given to the building problem solving group in order to keep the implementation phase on track.

District-wide steering committee shall receive reports of implementation for informational purposes.

C. In cases where the building problem solving group decision cannot be implemented, a report and presentation shall be made to the district-wide steering committee for disposition.

D. When recommendations are made, the building problem solving group shall receive a definite response, be it yes or no.

THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

The Duluth School System currently provides services to approximately 15,000 students. The District has eighteen elementary, four junior high and three senior high schools, an area vocational-technical institute, a secondary vocational center, and a number of alternative education programs for special needs students. Strong community education and adult education programs provide an important link with the community. Duluth has served as an outstanding model for Minnesota's expanding early childhood family education program.

The 1986-87 K-12 budget is approximately $79,500,000. There are 1,015 full-time teachers in the School District and approximately 2,000 employees.

The School District provides a broad and varied program aimed at challenging students at every level. The success of this effort is evidenced by the achievement levels of Duluth students. Nationally normed test results have consistently shown Duluth students to be above the national average in academic achievement. Over sixty percent of Duluth students go on to college, and many of those continue with post-graduate education. Twenty percent of high school graduates receive scholarship awards each year. In fact, more local college scholarships are available in Duluth on a per student basis than any other community in the United States.

COMMUNITY

The city of Duluth has a population of 92,811 with a wide range of cultural heritage, income levels, and age groups. "Places Rated Almanac" ranks Duluth number one in quality of health services; number one in recreational opportunities; number four in quality of transportation; fifth in the nation in safety from crime; seventh highest in quality of education; and ninth in the arts when compared to other American communities of similar size.

Duluth is the only city of its size in the United States to support both a full-time Ballet Company and a quality Symphony Orchestra. Other cultural offerings include the Duluth Playhouse, the Art Institute, the Matinee Musicale, the University Artist's Series, the Duluth Women's Institute, the Tweed Art Gallery, Glensheen, and the Canal Park Marine Museum, which is Minnesota's top tourist attraction.

The Duluth area supports three universities which provide a broad selection of high-quality undergraduate, graduate, professional, and continuing education programs. The University of Minnesota, Duluth, is a comprehensive four-year university that offers two-year, four-year, and graduate and professional degree programs. The University of Wisconsin, Superior, offers baccalaureate, master's, and specialist degrees. The College of St. Scholastica is the region's only private college and has recognized programs in key health care areas as well as strong programs in management, communications, computer information systems, and gerontology.

PARTICIPATORY MANAGEMENT: KEY TO SUCCESS

1987 American Association of School Administrators Convention
Friday, February 20, 1987
New Orleans, Louisiana

BIOGRAPHIES OF PRESENTERS

ELLIOTT MOESER

Mr. Moeser assumed the position of Superintendent of Schools in Duluth in June 1986. He was formerly Superintendent of Schools in Blackfoot, Idaho. Mr. Moeser serves as co-chair of the Duluth Quality of Work Life Steering Committee. His support for the participative management process and his extensive experience in positive labor management processes are big elements in the current success of the program. Mr. Moeser has given presentations on labor management, including a conference "Trends and Issues in Labor Relations: 1987" at the Humphrey Institute. In addition, Mr. Moeser brings to the presentation the perspective of a new superintendent entering into and directing a participation process .

LEN GOLEN

Len Golen directs the Communications/Public Relations program for the Duluth Public Schools. He is the facilitator for the District-Wide Quality of Work Life Program and is in charge of internal and external communications. Mr. Golen was selected by management and employees to facilitate the process. Mr. Golen served as a teacher in the school district for 22 years. He has extensive experience in communications, public relations, human relations, and employee relations and has facilitated many training sessions, workshops, and conferences.

PARTICIPATORY MANAGEMENT: KEY TO SUCCESS
DULUTH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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